

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

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FM AMEMBASSY TOKYO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6896

INFO AMCONSUL HONG KONG

USLO PEKING

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY TAIPEI

AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 TOKYO 2217

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINT, CH, JA

SUBJ: REACTION IN TOKYO TO PRC ACTING PREMIER APPOINTMENT

REFS: (A) STATE 030970, (B) HONG KONG 1433, (C) PEKING 0210

SUMMARY: APPOINTMENT OF HUA KUO-FENG AS PRC ACTING PREMIER SURPRISED TOKYO AND ELICITED A VARIETY OF THEORIES TO EXPLAIN TENG HSIAO-PING'S FAILURE, AT LEAST TEMPORARILY, TO GAIN THE PREMIERSHIP. ALTHOUGH NOT RULING OUT THE EMERGENCE OF TENG AS PREMIER OR IN CHOU EN-LAI'S FORMER PARTY POSITION, FONOFF BELIEVES MAO, FEARING THAT PRAGMATIC SET OF POLICY HAD BECOME TOO PRONOUNCED, TOOK INITIATIVE TO TOPPLE TENG. OTHER CHINA WATCHERS IN TOKYO SUPPORT THEORY THAT TENG HAD NOT CONSOLIDATED HIS POWER POSITION PRIOR TO CHOU'S DEATH AND HUA WAS NAMED AS TEMPORARY STAND-IN UNTIL THE STRUGGLE COULD BE RESOLVED. STILL OTHER OBSERVERS SEE HUA, BECAUSE OF BACKGROUND IN ADMINISTRATION AND AGRICULTURE, AS THE APPROPRIATE MAN TO LEAD CHINA. REGARDLESS OF REASONS FOR THIS UNEXPECTED APPOINTMENT, FONOFF BELIEVES INSTABILITY

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IN LEADERSHIP SUPERSTRUCTURE IN PEKING FURTHER DIMS

CHANCES OF EARLY PROGRESS ON THE SINO-JAPAN PEACE
FRIENDSHIP TREATY. NEGATIVE COMMENTS RECENTLY ON
JAPAN'S APPROACH TO RESOLVING THE HEGEMONY ISSUE LEADS
FONOFF TO BELIEVE THAT
CHINESE LEADERS REMAIN RELUCTANT TO DEAL WITH MIKI, DOUBT
HIS DURABILITY AND ARE AWAITING ELECTIONS IN JAPAN
BEFORE DECIDING WHETHER TO PROCEED WITH PFT. EMBASSY
ANALYSTS BELIEVE HUA A DURABLE COMPROMISE, AND THAT
TENG HSIAO-PING COULD STILL RETURN, THOUGH REDUCED IN STATURE.
END SUMMARY.

1. TOKYO CHINA WATCHERS AS SURPRISED AS EVERYONE ELSE
WITH THE APPOINTMENT OF HUA KUO-FENG AS ACTING PREMIER
OF THE PRC. TAKING ITS CUE FROM THE FONOFF, PRESS
BELIEVES HUA APPOINTMENT IS TEMPORARY, MANEUVERING IN
PEKING CONTINUES AND FINAL LEADERSHIP ARRANGEMENTS
ARE YET TO BE DECIDED. IN ADDITION, HOWEVER, FONOFF
CHINA DIVDIR FUJITA BELIEVES THAT MAO TOOK THE INITIATIVE
AND PLAYED THE MAJOR ROLE IN TOPPLING TENG. KNOWING
THAT A CENTRAL COMMITTEE VOTE WOULD HAVE ELECTED TENG
PREMIER, FUMITA SPECULATES, MAO INSERTED HUA KUO-FENG
AS ACTING PREMIER TO CONFUSE THE PROCESS AND SWING
THE PENDULUM SLIGHTLY LEFTWARD FROM TENG. IN THE
PAST, FUJITA SAID, MAO'S INSTINCT HAS BEEN TO DISRUPT
THE CHINESE BODY POLITIC WHENEVER THE PATH OF CHINA'S
REVOLUTION HAS BECOME TOO SET, EITHER ON A MODERATE
OR LEFTWARD COURSE. FUJITA DOES NOT RULE OUT A
COMEBACK BY TENG AS PREMIER OR IN OTHER POSITIONS AND
TOLD US HE ADVISED FONMIN MIYAZAWA THAT TENG'S CHANCES
OF LEAPING HIGHER TO OCCUPY CHOU'S FORMER NUMBER TWO
POSITION IN THE PARTY WERE STILL ONE IN FIVE. HE BASES
HIS ESTIMATE IN PART ON A PRC EMBASSY OFFICIAL'S
ANSWER FEB 11 TO QUESTION, "WHAT HAPPENED TO TENG."
OFFICIAL TOLD FUJITA, "IN THE REVOLUTION, IT IS THE
PARTY THAT COUNTS, NOT THE MAN." AT THE SAME TIME,
CHINESE DIPLOMATS IN OTHER POSTS HAVE REPORTED TO JAPANESE
COUNTERPARTS THAT TENG WILL REMAIN AS VICE PREMIER.

2. FUJITA BELIEVES THAT THE UNRESOLVED LEADERSHIP
SITUATION IN PEKING AND THE FACT THAT NO TOP JAPANESE
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FIGURES KNOW HUA KUO-FENG (ONLY FISHERY AGENCY AND
AGRICULTURE MINISTRY OFFICIALS HAVE MET HUA) MAKE
PROSPECTS EVEN DIMMER FOR EARLY MOVEMENT ON THE
PEACE FRIENDSHIP TREATY (PFT). RECENT NOISES FROM
CHINESE, ESPECIALLY CHINA-JAPAN FRIENDSHIP ASSN OFFICIALS,
HAVE BEEN NEGATIVELY CAST REGARDING FONMIN MIYAZAWA'S
APPROACH TO PFT. VARIOUS CHINESE HAVE RECENTLY
COMMENTED, SOMEWHAT AMBIGUOUSLY, "AS LONG AS BOTH SIDES

MAINTAIN THEIR POSITIONS, THERE CAN BE NO PROGRESS," BUT THEY DECLINE ANY MORE SPECIFIC RESPONSE. MOST OBSERVERS, INCLUDING FUJITA, THINK THAT IN ADDITION TO THEIR OWN DOMESTIC PREOCCUPATIONS, PEKING STILL ENTERTAINS STRONG DOUBTS ABOUT PM MIKI AND IS WAITING UNTIL PROSPECTS FOR THE NEXT LOWER HOUSE ELECTIONS ARE CLEAR OR THE ELECTIONS EVEN HELD BEFORE DECIDING WHETHER TO PROCEED WITH MIKI TO CONCLUDE THE PFT. CORROBORATING THIS INTERPRETATION, PRC CHARGE MI KUO-CHUN RECENTLY REPOSED TO QUESTION POSED BY FRG EMBASSY POLCOUNS ASKING HOW LONG IT MIGHT TAKE TO CONCLUDE THE TREATY. MI REPLIED, "HOW LONG WILL MIKI BE IN COMMAND?" A NEW READING MAY SOON BE POSSIBLE SINCE PRC AMB CHEN CHU IS EXPECTED BACK IN TOKYO FEB 13. IN GENERAL, FUJITA DOES NOT ANTICIPATE MAJOR CHANCE UNDER ACTING PREMIER HUA IN PRC DOMESTIC OR FOREIGN POLICY AT LEAST AS LONG AS MAO IS AROUND.

3. FOR WHAT IT IS WORTH, OTHER CHINA WATCHERS IN TOKYO HAVE TAKEN DIFFERENT LINES ON THE JIA APPOINTMENT. NEW ZEALAND AND FRG EMBASSIES SHARE OUR GENERAL ASSESSMENT IN REFTELS. IN CONTRAST, SINGAPORE POLCOUNS ALI FLATLY REFUTES THAT HUA WAS A COMPROMISE AND CONTENDS INSTEAD THAT HIS BACKGROUND IN PROVINCIAL ADMINISTRATION AND AGRICULTURE AND HIS RELATIVE YOUTH MAKE HIM UNIQUELY QUALIFIED TO SERVE AS PREMIER OF CHINA. TO ALI, HUA IS THE PERSONIFICATION OF RECENT POLICY LINES CALLING FOR AGRICULTURAL ADVANCE ON THE TA CHAI MODEL. HUA IS IN EFFECT A CORRECTIVE FOR POLICIES CALLING FOR INDUSTRIAL/ URBAN DEVELOPMENT. IN ALI'S VIEW, WHILE CHINA WILL PURSUE GOAL OF MODERN SOCIALIST (INDUSTRIAL) STATE BY 2000, HUA WILL ALSO MAKE CERTAIN THAT CHINA'S AGRICULTURAL SECTOR WILL NOT SUFFER BY COMPARISON. CONFIDENTIAL

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ALI THINKS TENG IS FINISHED AND THE OUTSIDE WORLD WILL NOT HEAR OF HIM AGAIN. WITHOUT HIS SPONSOR CHOU, TENG COLLAPSED.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L FINAL SECTION OF 2 TOKYO 2217

4. AUSTRALIAN EMBOFF, REFERRING FREQUENTLY TO AUSTRALIAN EMBASSY PEKING ASSESSMENT, TOOK SIMILAR BUT A LESS ADAMANT LINE THAN ALI. HE ALSO SPECULATED THAT DECISION TO RELEASE SOVIET HELICOPTER PILOTS WAS MADE BY TENG. REVERSION TO HARD ANTI-SOVIET LINE ALMOST IMMEDIATELY AFTERWARD INDICATED MAO'S DISPLEASURE WITH THE DECISION AND COST TENG THE PREMIERSHIP.

T. COMMENT: EMBASSY ANALYSTS SUBSCRIBE TO PRINCIPAL CONCLUSIONS IN REFTELS. WE BELIEVE TENG LOST HIS JOB BECAUSE OTHER ELEMENTS OF THE BODY POLITIC COULD NOT ABIDE THE PROSPECT OF CULTURAL REVOLUTION TARGET BEING REHABILITATED WHOLESAL, THUS THREATENING THEIR OWN JOBS AND POSITIONS. IT SEEMS LIKELY THAT TENG'S OPPONENTS ASKED FOR AN RECEIVED ACQUIESCENCE OF MAO TO DENY HIM PREMIERSHIP, BUT THAT CHAIRMAN DID NOT TAKE INITIATIVE, AS FUJITA SPECULATES.

6. BASIC ELEMENTS OF HUA KUO-FENG'S APPEAL SEEM TO BE THREE-FOLD: 1) HE IS COMPETENT AND EXPERIENCED IN DEALING WITH SOME OF BASIC ISSUES CONFRONTING CHINA; CONFIDENTIAL

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2) HE IS RELATIVELY YOUNG AND "CLEAN" -- IDENTIFIED WITH NEITHER THE TARGET NOR THE EXCESSES OF THE CULTURAL REVOLUTION; 3) HE IS NOT REPEAT NOT TENG HSIAO-PING WHOSE RETURN AND GROWING POWER MUST HAVE SEEMED TO MANY AS SINISTER DEVELOPMENT.

7. THE SOURCES OF HUA'S APPEAL SUGGEST THAT HE MAY TURN OUT TO BE A RATHER DURABLE COMPROMISE. BECAUSE OF AGE, TENG WAS NEVER GOING TO BE MUCH MORE THAN A TRANSITIONAL FIGURE IN THE SUCCESSION AND HUA, ALONG WITH CHANG CHUN-CHIAO AND OTHERS HAS LONG SEEMED SLATED FOR HIGHER POSITION AFTER TENG. IT MAY BE THAT CHINA'S LEADERS, SENSING THAT TENG'S INTERREGNUM WOULD EXACERBATE RATHER THAN BRIDGE THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE FACTIONS, MOVED TO FORESHORTEN THE INTERIM AND GET ON WITH THE NEW GENERATION.

8. THE WAY TENG IS HANDLED WILL PROVIDE IMPORTANT CLUES AS TO THE NATURE OF THE STRUGGLE. IF HE SIMPLY DISAPPEARS, IT WILL SUGGEST THAT CHINA IS ONCE AGAIN IN THE MIDDLE OF ONE OF THOSE VICIOUS DOG FIGHTS THAT HAVE PERIODICALLY MARKED COMPETITION FOR CONTROL OVER THE DICTATORSHIP OF THE PROLETARIAT. HIS RETENTION IN PARTY OR STATE POSTS, ON THE OTHER HAND, WILL SUGGEST THAT A MORE MATURE AND MORE STABLE APPROACH TO THE TRANSFER OF POWER HAS BEEN ACHIEVED IN PEKING. OUR HUNCH IS THAT TENG WILL REAPPEAR, THOUGH REDUCED IN STATURE.
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